

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 18 is amended herein. Claims 11, and 18-20 are withdrawn. Please note that all claims currently pending in the referenced application are shown below. Please enter these claims as amended. Upon entry, this listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of claims:

1. (Original) An isolated strain of *Lactococcus* species comprising a defective thymidylate synthase gene.
2. (Original) The isolated strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 1, wherein said thymidylate synthase gene has been inactivated by gene disruption.
3. (Original) The isolated strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 1, wherein the *Lactococcus* species is *Lactococcus lactis*.
4. (Original) The isolated strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 2, wherein the *Lactococcus* species is *Lactococcus lactis*.
5. (Original) A transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species, said *Lactococcus* species comprising a defective thymidylate synthase gene, and further comprising a transforming plasmid, said transforming plasmid not having an intact thymidylate synthase gene.
6. (Original) The transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 5, further comprising a gene encoding a molecule of interest.
7. (Original) The transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 6, wherein said molecule of interest is Interleukin-10.

8. (Original) The transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 5, wherein said *Lactococcus* species is *Lactococcus lactis*.

9. (Original) The transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 8, wherein the *Lactococcus lactis* comprises a gene encoding a molecule of interest.

10. (Original) The transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 9, wherein the molecule of interest is Interleukin-10.

11. (Withdrawn) A method for delivering a molecule of interest to a subject, said method comprising administering the transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 6 to the subject.

12. (Original) A composition comprising:
a transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species comprising a defective thymidylate synthase gene, and further comprising a transforming plasmid, said transforming plasmid not having an intact thymidylate synthase gene.

13. (Original) The composition of claim 12, wherein the *Lactococcus* species further comprises a gene encoding a molecule of interest.

14. (Original) The composition of claim 13, wherein said molecule of interest is Interleukin-10.

15. (Original) The composition of claim 12, wherein said *Lactococcus* species is *Lactococcus lactis*.

16. (Original) The composition of claim 15, wherein the *Lactococcus lactis* comprises

a gene encoding a molecule of interest.

17. (Original) The composition of claim 16, wherein the molecule of interest is Interleukin-10.

18. (Withdrawn-currently amended) A method of treating inflammatory bowel disease in a subject, said method comprising:

administering to the subject a transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species ~~comprising a gene encoding a molecule of interest of claim 6.~~

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, wherein the molecule of interest is Interleukin-10.

20. (Withdrawn) A method for delivering a molecule of interest to a subject, said method comprising administering the transformed strain of *Lactococcus* species of claim 9 to the subject.